UNITED NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1996/171
25 April 1996

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-second session
Agenda item 7

THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION

Letter dated 25 April 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations Office at Geneva, addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

The Permanent Representative of Morocco sent you a note entitled "Information on the status of the process (of peace?) in (Western) Sahara", which was published as an official document (E/CN.4/1996/161) of the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights under agenda item 7 on "The right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation".

The text of the note is supposed to be a reply to the many statements and written reports by non-governmental organizations to the Commission on Human Rights on the question of Western Sahara. The NGOs will take the note for what it is worth and give it whatever attention they deem appropriate.

I myself would like to inform you that I am perplexed and indignant. The author of the note maintains stoically - since it takes a great deal of courage to say some things publicly - that the Saharan refugees are living inside a double security cordon, i.e. the other party's (Frente POLISARIO's) police apparatus and the host country's (Algeria's) military authority, to prevent them from leaving the region. We would be tempted, if that statement was even slightly responsible, to ask where they would go if they could leave the region.

Algeria has taken in hundreds of thousands of Saharan refugees who fled their country, Western Sahara, following the Moroccan invasion. They are living in camps which they set up, for obvious reasons, as close as possible to their home country.

The camps are accessible to all intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations, many members and representatives of which stay in them regularly and freely.

About 100 persons, including parliamentarians from several European countries, spent the 1996 Easter holidays in the camps, where they shared bed and board with the Saharan refugees.

The "double security cordon" exists only in the imagination of the Permanent Representative of Morocco, who takes any opportunity he can to engage in futile propaganda. Since it is true that there are no good arguments in favour of a bad cause, he resorts to fabrication and gets bogged down in his own ramblings.

Is it not better to rely on reason in order to show a desire for peace? Like the rest of the world, North Africa needs peace to build itself up with the help of all its peoples.

(Signed) Hocine MEGHLAOUI
Permanent Representative